(a) whether number of encroachments on defences estate, Cantt. and defence land have increased during the last three years various plots of land and building under defence have been converted for non-defence purposes; and

(b) if so, action taken by Government in this regard and the details of such property in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Encroachments have increased marginally in certain areas whereas these have decreased in some areas. Approximately, 4888 acres of defence land has been freed feom encroachments during the last three years.

Certain instances of diversion of defence land/buildings in certain places have come to the notice of the Government in the past. Appropriate directions/instructions have been issued in such cases as a remedial measure. The details of properties diverted for non-defence purposes in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Indo-US joint exercise

290. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US propose to exercise jointly with the Indian Armed Forces;

(b) if so, the details of the programme chalked out in this regard; and

(c) the measures proposed to ensure that the US military officers do not seek access to Indian bases and military infrastructure?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) As part of the Indo-US Defence Cooperation, exercises involving the Armed Forces of the two countries have been held in the recent past and are also planned to be held in future both in the United States of America and in India. Such exercises provide invaluable exposure to the Armed Forces of India and the experience gained during

the course of these exercises serves as a vital input for upgrading the skills and capabilities of our Armed Forces. It would, however, not be in the national interest to divulge specific details of the exercises planned to be carried out by the Armed Forces of the two countries jointly.

(c) Adequate measures are taken for safeguarding our national interests while planning and executing such exercises.

Recruitment in Army from Uttaranchal

†291. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons found eligible for recruitment in army in Uttaranchal;

(b) whether it is a fact that the number of persons recruited from this region has decreased during recent years; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken to increase the number of persons for recruitment in Indian army from this region?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI .GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The eligibility of youth for recruitment in the Army is determined on the basis of Recruitable male Population of a State which is 10% of the total male population, irrespective of their caste, class, region, community and domicile, provided they meet laid down criteria of physical, educational and medical standards. As per 2001 census, 4,31,640 youth were considered eligible for recruitment in the Army from Uttaranchal.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Rectification of snags in T-90 Tanks

292. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Army Chief during his recent visit to Russia had taken up the matter of rectification of technical snags found in T-90 Tanks currently in use in India;

†Original notice of the question wee received in Hindi.